

Accountants' Responses to the Global Reporting Initiative Assurance Guidelines

Abstract

The year 2013 was a defining moment for sustainability accounting reporting. The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) launched reporting guidelines for accounting for sustainability (Perego, Kennedy, & Whiteman, 2016). The GRI is a non-profit organization committed to promulgating sustainability accounting reporting and assurance (Soh, Leung, & Leong, 2015). Promoters of sustainability seek to provide for the needs of the current global population while maintaining the ability to provide for future generations (Environmental Protection Agency, 2016). Sustainability accounting reporting is a combination of economic, social, and environmental issues incorporating both financial and nonfinancial elements (Witjes, Vermeulen, & Cramer, 2017). The GRI Assurance Guidelines address independence, competence, quality control, engagement procedures, presentation, and other required auditing applications (GRI, 2013). According to KPMG (2018), the required audit applications are the bedrock of quality audits. Additionally, the survey added application of GRI guidelines (GRI, 2013). The purpose of this study was to examine accountants' perceptions of proficiency in sustainability assurance reporting from the GRI. The random sample included U. S. CPAs involved in audit who were members of the American Institute of CPAs. While most of the respondents agreed with the basic tenets of auditing, there were some auditors who did not agree. These results have implications for educators and practicing auditors.

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